

ER 62-2635

April 25, 1962

Dear Pierre:

Last night I received the "new" Nixon book and attach photostat copies of pages 353, 354, and 355. I think you will find the footnote on page 354 of interest. Except for the addition of the footnote, there are no other changes.

Sincerely,

John A. McCone
Director

The Honorable Pierre E. G. Salinger
Press Secretary to the President
The White House
Washington 25, D. C.

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ER 62-2637

April 25, 1962

Dear Mac:

Last night I received the "new" Nixon book and attach photostat copies of pages 353, 354, and 355. I think you will find the footnote on page 354 of interest. Except for the addition of the footnote, there are no other changes.

Sincerely,

John A. McCone
Director

The Honorable McGeorge Bundy
Special Assistant to the President
for National Security Affairs
The White House
Washington 25, D. C.

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economic banditry being practiced by this regime against our country and our citizens."

We flew back North late that night and on Wednesday evening, October 19, Kennedy and I were co-speakers at Cardinal Spellman's annual Alfred E. Smith Memorial Dinner. Kennedy spoke first and read a speech which delighted this distinguished audience with its wit but also irritated them with an incredible display of bad judgment. At this strictly non-political, non-partisan affair, he proceeded to raise what were obviously partisan political overtones. When I then spoke extemporaneously, all I had to do to top his performance was to avoid any statement that smacked of partisanship. The effect was easily predictable. He had received polite applause. I received a prolonged ovation.

Kennedy himself referred ruefully to this incident when we met in Miami immediately after the election. He was discussing voting patterns among Catholics and he pointed out that economics rather than religion primarily determined how people voted. And then he added with a smile, "You saw how those wealthy Catholics reacted at the Al Smith Dinner in New York."

I had reserved Thursday for preparations for the fourth and final television debate. Foreign policy was to be the sole subject for discussion, and I knew that this was a major opportunity for me to move ahead—not only in the debate series but in the campaign itself. But Kennedy, recognizing that my Miami speech had taken most of the wind out of his sails on the Cuba issue, chose this day before the fourth debate for a major counterattack of his own. Huge black headlines in all the afternoon papers put it succinctly:

KENNEDY ADVOCATES U.S. INTERVENTION IN CUBA
CALLS FOR AID TO REBEL FORCES IN CUBA

I could hardly believe my eyes. As early as September 23, Kennedy had given an exclusive statement to the Scripps-Howard papers in which he said, "The forces fighting for freedom in exile and in the mountains of Cuba should be sustained and assisted." But he had not followed up by advocating what was, in effect, direct intervention in Cuba in violation of our treaties with other Latin American countries—until now. Now, on October 20, he said:

We must attempt to strengthen the non-Batista democratic anti-Castro forces in exile, and in Cuba itself, who offer eventual hope of overthrowing Castro. Thus far, these fighters for freedom have had virtually no support from our government.

SIX CRISES

As soon as I saw the story and read the statement I asked Fred Seaton to come to my hotel room. I knew that President Eisenhower had arranged for Kennedy to receive regular briefings by Allen Dulles, Director of the CIA, on all covert operations around the world, as well as on the latest intelligence estimates—precisely so he would be as well aware as I of what our policies and programs were. I asked Seaton to call the White House at once on the security line and find out whether or not Dulles had briefed Kennedy on the fact that for months the CIA had not only been supporting and assisting but actually training Cuban exiles for the eventual purpose of supporting an invasion of Cuba itself.*

Seaton reported back to me in half an hour. His answer: Kennedy had been briefed on this operation.

For the first and only time in the campaign, I got mad at Kennedy—personally. I understand and expect hard-hitting attacks in a campaign. But in this instance I thought that Kennedy, with full knowledge of the facts, was jeopardizing the security of a United States foreign policy operation. And my rage was greater because I could do nothing about it.

I was faced with what was probably the most difficult decision of the campaign. Kennedy had me at a terrible disadvantage. He knew, as I did, that public sentiment in the United States was overwhelmingly in favor of a tougher line against Castro. I had long favored and fought for this line within the Administration, and the covert training of Cuban exiles as well as the new overt quarantine policy were programs due, in substantial part at least, to my efforts. Kennedy was now publicly advocating what was already the policy of the American Government—covertly—and Kennedy had been so informed. But by stating such a position publicly, he obviously stood to gain the support of all those who wanted a stronger policy against Castro but who, of course, did not know of our covert programs already under way.

What could I do? One course would be simply to state that what Kennedy was advocating as a new policy was already being done, had

* Senator Kennedy was briefed on Cuba by CIA representatives on July 23, 1960, at Hyannis Port, Massachusetts. Press accounts at the time characterized this briefing as a "nothing withheld rundown" on the "two hotspots, Cuba and the Congo." The New York Times on July 24, reported "... Such secret information as was added to the Senator's fund of knowledge about world affairs will remain secret. But it provides guidance for his campaign utterances dealing with foreign policy and defense and it puts him on the same footing as the administration's candidate, presumably Vice President Nixon."

However, after the publication of the first edition of this book, the White House issued a statement on March 20, 1962, denying that the two and one-fourth hours briefing covered any United States operation relating to Cuba.

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been adopted as a policy as a result of my direct support, and that Kennedy was endangering the security of the whole operation by his public statement. But this would be, for me, an utterly irresponsible act: it would disclose a secret operation and completely destroy its effectiveness.

There was only one thing I could do. The covert operation had to be protected at all costs. I must not even suggest by implication that the United States was rendering aid to rebel forces in and out of Cuba. In fact, I must go to the other extreme: I must attack the Kennedy proposal to provide such aid as wrong and irresponsible because it would violate our treaty commitments.

This then was the background for the fourth debate. Predictably, the Cuba issue was raised almost at once—and was frequently returned to, both by the panel of questioners and by the candidates. This is what I said:

I think that Senator Kennedy's policies and recommendations for the handling of the Castro regime are probably the most dangerously irresponsible recommendations that he's made during the course of this campaign.

But I could not say why. Instead, I took this tack:

... if we were to follow that recommendation . . . we would lose all of our friends in Latin America, we would probably be condemned in the United Nations, and we would not accomplish our objective . . . It would be an open invitation for Mr. Khrushchev . . . to come into Latin America and to engage us in what would be a civil war and possibly even worse than that.

I concluded by returning to my previous recommendation for a policy of strict quarantine—on every diplomatic and economic front. Kennedy suggested, in turn, that a policy of quarantine would be too little, too late, and in every way short of the need for vigorous action.

When the debate was over, I felt that I had made as good a case as possible for my point of view, but I had no illusion about the effect on the public generally. I was in the ironic position of appearing to be "softer" on Castro than Kennedy—which was exactly the opposite of the truth, if only the whole record could be disclosed.

My attack was effective but with the wrong audience. Doug Dillon called from Washington immediately after we went off the air and said he thought it was my best effort yet and that I had handled the Cuban situation particularly well. He knew the handicaps under which I had had to operate on this issue.